

Skalpel – Skalpel (2004)

Written by bluesever
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1 *High* 4:25 2 *Not Too Bad* 3:16 3 *1958* 2:31 4 *Together* 5:19 5 *So Far* 5:14 6 *Break In* 5:37 7 *Quiz* 2:35 8 *Asphodel* 3:34 9 *Theme From "Behind The Curtain"* 4:12 10 *Sculpture* 4:52 Personnel: Skalpel, aka Marcin Cichy and Igor Pudlo.

Not too far into Skalpel, a radio voice quietly allows, "Let them play their jazz records, and dance all night if they want to." And that's as good an introduction as any to this jam-oriented collection, which draws its strength from two years of record-hunting by Wrocław producers Marcin Cichy and Igor Pudlo. One might not imagine that Poland would have a rich jazz heritage, especially given the communist decrees against the destabilizing properties of the American art form. But here's evidence that it did indeed happen; that is, if you believe these two guys found this much music hidden in record bins.

I suppose listeners obsessed with Polish jazz could spend man-years identifying clips from Skalpel. That's their trip. Even though this is a hip-hop experience (seeing as how it samples the cuts and the artists made their name as DJs), it also draws substantively from the lessons of electronica. As a label, Ninja Tune has managed to simultaneously host an incredible variety of musicians, yet somehow most of the music shares common features of lush textures, jazzy rhythms, and unexpected use of bits and pieces of sound.

All of that can be found here. But don't go looking for jazz in the usual sense, because you'll be disappointed. These cuts may swing, and they may include some outstanding instrumental parts, but in the end this is a stitch job, plain and simple, start to finish. As such you have to judge it by how the pieces are put together, and quite honestly it's hard to imagine it done better, provided you aren't interested in changes, solos or group improvisation. The sound, while heavily produced and featuring obvious manifestations of electronics, still maintains an acoustic quality that grounds it and gives it substance.

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"Pretend you can see everything happening in your mind," intones a male voice at the start of "Break In," which is about as subtle a statement as any about the psychedelic nature of Skalpel. Reverberant organ cascades over a bass theme, driven by live-sounding drumming that resides largely on the snare and cymbals. This jam makes for a trip that never interrupts, shocks, or otherwise causes trouble with your head. But don't mistake that for a lack of substance, because Skalpel has that quality in abundance. ---AAJ STAFF, allaboutjazz.com

Debiutancka płyta wrocławskiego duetu Skalpel, wydana nakładem legendarnej londyńskiej wytwórni Ninja Tune, to bez wątpienia jedno z najważniejszych wydarzeń muzycznych tego roku. Igor Pudło wraz ze stanowiącym drugą połowę Skalpela Marcinem Cichym przekopali się w ciągu ostatnich dwóch lat przez góry płyt z polskim jazzem z lat 60 i 70. Otrzymaliśmy dzięki temu płytę na wskroś oryginalną i mocno polską. Jest tu coś z warszawskiego, abstrakcyjnego hip-hopu Noona, z intensywnej jazzowej dynamiki Robotobiboka. Są mgliste, hipnotyczne i doskonale brzmiące dźwięki, a wszystko oparte na doskonale spreparowanych samplach. Jazda obowiązkowa dla tych wszystkich, którzy oczekują od muzyki znacznie więcej niż tylko rozrywki. ---merlin.pl

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